

2712

Upper Mississippi Airboater's Association
3025 East Ave. S.
La Crosse, WI 54601

February 2, 2006

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife & Fish Refuge
Attn: Don Hultman
51 East 4th St., Room 101
Winona, MN 55987

Dear Don,

The Upper Mississippi Airboater's Association is concerned about Plan E. Our members have hands on knowledge of the individual pools and are passionate about maintaining a healthy river system. There is no group more concerned about the health of the river. Many of us rely on the river for our livelihood and recreation. We understand that without a healthy river system there would be no hunting, fishing, trapping and play. We want to work with the FWS to improve the quality of habitat on the river.

Our organization believes the refuge is a precious ecosystem. The continued increase by different users places a great deal of pressure on the resource as well as the partnering agencies (FWS, State Dept. of Natural Resources, Local Government) to manage the refuge.

We are concerned that Plan E is an infringement on states rights for free navigation. At no time has the state of Wisconsin or the Department of the Army given up navigational rights to the FWS. Our organization will not compromise navigation.

Based on our intimate knowledge of the river our organization would like to offer the following suggestions as to "voluntary" avoidance areas and time frames that we feel would best serve resting wildlife.

First, create "voluntary" no wake zones on all proposed no wake zones from April 1st thru July 15th. During this time frame, our association membership will voluntarily not access these areas. In addition, we will work diligently to increase our membership. We will educate our members on the value of reducing access to these areas that have heightened importance for nesting birds and other wildlife production.

Second, we offer changes to the proposed plan E no wake zones as included on attachments A-G. These would modify the current proposed boundaries to the new ones for the "voluntary" no wake zones.

Third, make all electric motor zones into slow no wake zones with the exception of the current electric motor zone existing today (2006 pool 6).

Fourth, we will work with state and local agencies to provide a network of our membership for emergency rescue needs up and down the Upper Mississippi Refuge. This would be coordinated through the above mentioned agencies as well as your agency.

Fifth, we will work to further efforts that benefit the refuge through clean up days. We will encourage our membership's involvement through use of airboat/hovercraft to assist in accessing areas of the refuge found to be virtually non-accessible by traditional watercraft.

Sixth, we will work on expanding our association's impact on work with the handicapped, elderly and our youth, to provide great access to refuge experiences through special fishing and hunting days sponsored by our association.

Our association is also drafting a set of ethics to adhere to in the use of airboats and hovercrafts (see attachment H). This should improve our relationship with other user groups.

With respect to other components of Plan E, we as an association leave that to our individual member's comments at this time.

We hope that these six suggestions when placed in the plan, provide the FWS with a mechanism to go forward for all users.

If you have any questions please contact me at 608-788-2500 ext. 207.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tim Morgan", with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Tim Morgan
Association Representative

Enc.

Upper Mississippi Airboater's Association Code of Ethics

DRAFT

1. Respect the right of everyone to enjoy the Upper Mississippi waterways.
2. Learn and observe all boating regulations, navigation rules and vessel safety equipment requirements.
3. Recognize that the noise generated from an airboat propeller and engine exhaust system may annoy others.
4. Equip the airboat with an approved muffling device and operate it in a manner that will reduce engine exhaust sound levels.
5. Operate at a slow speed on or near boat ramps. Move away an adequate distance before power up, and where possible – no power loading.
6. Use slow speed to reduce noise near residential and public use areas.
7. Be extra cautious to reduce sound levels during nighttime hours.
8. Understand that the public will judge all airboaters by the actions of one.
9. Protect natural resources and do not disturb wildlife.
10. Slow down when turning into a blind slough or corner.

ATTACHMENT H



3011

March 6, 2006

Mr. Don Hultman, Refuge Manager
Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife & Fish Refuge
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Attention: CCP Comment
51 East 4th St, Room 101
Winona, MN 55987

Dear Don,

On behalf of our newly founded Upper Mississippi River Airboaters Association we appreciate your meeting with us on our concerns of Plan E.

I want to reconfirm that we are not in favor of your restrictions of navigation on the river through no wake (no airboat) and electric motor areas.

We hope our proposal (see attached) provides you with some alternatives to your current plan. Our association hopes to be an asset to the Fish & Wildlife Services over the next 15 years.

Sincerely,

Tim Morgan, President
Upper Mississippi River Airboaters Association

Enc.

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3025 East Ave. S.
La Crosse, WI 54601**

February 2, 2006

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife & Fish Refuge
Attn: Don Hultman
51 East 4th St., Room 101
Winona, MN 55987

Dear Don,

The Upper Mississippi Airboater's Association is concerned about Plan F. Our members have hands on knowledge of the individual pools and are passionate about maintaining a healthy river system. There is no group more concerned about the health of the river. Many of us rely on the river for our livelihood and recreation. We understand that without a healthy river system there would be no hunting, fishing, trapping and play. We want to work with the FWS to improve the quality of habitat on the river.

Our organization believes the refuge is a precious ecosystem. The continued increase by different users places a great deal of pressure on the resource as well as the partnering agencies (FWS, State Dept. of Natural Resources, Local Government) to manage the refuge.

We are concerned that Plan F is an infringement on states rights for free navigation. At no time has the state of Wisconsin or the Department of the Army given up navigational rights to the FWS. Our organization will not compromise navigation.

Based on our intimate knowledge of the river our organization would like to offer the following suggestions as to "voluntary" avoidance areas and time frames that we feel would best serve resting wildlife.

First, create "voluntary" no wake zones on all proposed no wake zones from April 1st thru July 15th. During this time frame, our association membership will voluntarily not access these areas. In addition, we will work diligently to increase our membership. We will educate our members on the value of reducing access to these areas that have heightened importance for nesting birds and other wildlife production.

Second, we offer changes to the proposed plan F no wake zones as included on attachments A-G. These would modify the current proposed boundaries to the new ones for the "voluntary" no wake zones.

Third, make all electric motor zones into slow no wake zones with the exception of the current electric motor zone existing today (2006 pool 6).

Fourth, we will work with state and local agencies to provide a network of our membership for emergency rescue needs up and down the Upper Mississippi Refuge. This would be coordinated through the above mentioned agencies as well as your agency.

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Our association is also drafting a set of ethics to adhere to in the use of airboats and hovercrafts (see attachment H). This should improve our relationship with other user groups.

With respect to other components of Plan F, we as an association leave that to our individual member's comments at this time.

We hope that these six suggestions when placed in the plan, provide the FWS with a mechanism to go forward for all users.

If you have any questions please contact me at 608-788-2500 ext. 207.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tim Morgan", written over a horizontal line.

Tim Morgan
Association Representative

Enc.

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ATTACHMENT H